

Earthed *clean living*

If, by the time you read this, Barack Obama is still with us and hasn't been assassinated by an uzi-toting right-wing lunatic, here's a quick lowdown of whether, in my humble estimation, he may be able to save our planet.

Don't worry! I'm not trying to suggest he's not the new messiah, or the re-incarnation of Martin Luther King, or in any way not better than sliced Hovis: heaven forbid. Believe me, I'm as excited as everyone else. I just thought it might be a good idea to surface for a moment from the haze of euphoria currently engulfing us and ask the question that should be asked of any elected politician: can they deliver on their extravagant promises?

In the early days of his campaign, Obama had some folk feeling a little queasy over his insistence on voting, in 2005, for an ill-advised coal industry subsidies bill and for accepting \$159,000 in campaign contributions from Exelon, the US's largest nuclear power plant operator. He also showed an unhealthy early interest in the wrong kind of biofuel, voting on an array of bills supporting ethanol production.

"Where is the money going to come from to launch Obama's green revolution?"

Since 2007, however, he has set environmentalists' hearts a-flutter with multiple green crowd-pleasers. These include the promise to create five million new jobs at green energy projects through a \$150bn cash injection; a call to cut US CO₂ emissions to 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050; and pleas for all new buildings in the US to be carbon neutral by 2030.

But most of these splendid ideas are calls to action, rather than actual action. Where, for example, is the money going to come from to launch Obama's green revolution, when the US is going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression? Before he ran for president, he was against the war, so I'm happy to accept that's true. But before running for president, his environmental record was confused at best. As a result, only his vow to make all White House car fleets hybrid within the year seems a confident possibility. But then again, we've already had one miracle this month, so I'm not going to be cynical. Yet.

Emma Rubach

If I Was Queen For A Day... *by Amanda Feilding, The Beckley Foundation*

Man has always sought to alter his consciousness, whether through drugs, meditation or the endorphin-rush of dance and song, and to deny the use of psychoactive substances through prohibition is unrealistic and counter-productive.

If I were Queen for a day I would seek to bring about a greater understanding of why people want to expand their conscious states and how we can move towards a more just and effective approach to the control of drugs.

As the founder and director of The Beckley Foundation, an independent think-tank that investigates consciousness and its changing states, I would seek to implement a more rational approach to national and international drug policy. At The Beckley Foundation, we promote world-class research into the science, health, politics and history of practices used to alter consciousness. This leads us to have

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an interest in drug policy and how we can better manage the reality of a world awash with psychoactive substances, in order to minimise the harms to individuals and society.

The 'war on drugs' has failed by its own criteria, with illegal drugs cheaper and more readily available than ever before, thereby channelling hundreds of billions into the hands of criminals. In the wake of this war comes untold suffering and violations of human rights. From the impoverished people in producer/transit countries whose lives are endangered by the violence and instability that comes with the production and trafficking of drugs, to the developed world, where addicts

receive punishment rather than treatment, and young people's futures are blighted by a criminal record for mere drug use or possession.

The present system of prohibition is hardest on those already alienated from society – the poor, minority groups, and people suffering from mental health problems. If I were Queen, I would introduce a system emphasising drug education and treatment services; an approach which would recognise the perceived benefits as well as the potential dangers of drug use, and would include a better understanding of use as opposed to misuse. The emphasis would be to avoid addiction, and the crime and violence that can accompany it, and promote a better understanding of the different drugs and their different dangers.

For more information about The Beckley Foundation go to www.beckleyfoundation.org

Amanda Feilding



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